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THE ΤΠΑΙΘΡΟΣ ΚΡΗΝΗ OF PIRENE

[PLATES XI, XII]

THE following article is intended as a supplement to the two which appeared in this *Journal* in 1900, Vol. IV, pp. 204 ff., and is evoked by the fact that in the spring of 1901 further excavations were made in the quadrangle in front of the façade of Pirene.

At the time of the publication of the above-mentioned articles there was a round basin in the middle of the quadrangle. But it had always appeared unlikely that this was the basin referred to by Pausanias as an open-air basin into which the water flowed. Water could hardly be said to *flow* into it, inasmuch as it was simply a depression about 1 m. deep in a mass of solid masonry covered with a marble floor. Water did somehow find its way into it through an irregular break in the bottom of the surrounding masonry, as well as through a gutter cut in the floor. But still it remained doubtful whether Pausanias would apply the word flow (ῥεῖ) to such an oozing through as this. The straight gutter which appeared near the western edge of the basin and passed right through it, seemed to belong not to it, but to some previous arrangement. It was this gutter, then, which led us to break up the pavement around the round basin, in the hope of finding an older quadrangular basin.

We began in front of the Byzantine columns, and immediately found the same sort of a gutter running at right angles to the other one, close to a wall running east and west, about 1 m. high, and faced with marble. Proceeding westward along

this face, we soon found the southwest corner where the gutter made its rectangular turn. At this point we had proof enough of the existence of the rectangular basin. But we proceeded to draw out all the filling between the walls of the square basin and the round basin, a process by which, of course, the latter disappeared. It was a most laborious process; the filling was composed of architectural pieces, among which were many fragments of Doric columns, bonded by a cement much harder and tougher than the blocks of stone. The mass gave way only under the constant application of dynamite.

The form of the basin which came out is shown on the new plan drawn by Mr. B. Powell (PLATE XI).[1] The accompanying scale (in metres) makes it unnecessary to give many measurements in figures. PLATE XII supplements the plan.

At the southern end water was discharged into this basin through two round holes near the top, placed symmetrically in front of the middle of each of the two middle chambers of Pirene. The water, in passing from these chambers into the basin, traverses another very shallow and rather narrow basin stretched out in front of these two chambers. The two holes are pierced in the thin wall which separates the two basins. The outflow was through an orifice at the bottom of the basin, on the north side near the northeast corner. The gutter which runs all around the basin is broken at this point by a side branch which runs into the orifice.[2] The flow was no doubt into the broad and deep conduit running east and west about 2 m. north of the basin, and partly excavated in 1898. We have, then, a complete and intelligible system of supply and discharge.

[1] This plan has made some slight corrections of the old one, *Am. J. Arch.* IV (1900), p. 228, notably at the west end of the system of chambers. It is also made to include a little of the court of a Roman building north of Pirene.

[2] On either side of the side branch, and running across the main line, were two moulded marble blocks with the moulded sides turned outward (see PLATE XII). These probably belonged to the discharge system of the round basin. Traces were found of a roughly cut gutter, partly in the marble floor and partly in the filling above it, which ran from below a rude hole, between the two already mentioned, in the front wall of the shallow basin through the round basin to this orifice.

The basin is floored with marble, with the exception of the blocks in which the gutter was cut, which are of white limestone. The sides also had marble coating; and since the floor of the quadrangle, the façade of Pirene, and the walls of the apex were all covered with marble, the whole quadrangle was *one marble magnificence* suited to please even Herodes Atticus, to whom it quite probably owed its existence.[1] A flight of four marble-covered steps led down from the quadrangle into the basin on its north side.

The most striking feature of the basin is its lack of symmetry in itself and in its location in the quadrangle. For example, its breadth at the north end is 0.50 m. greater than at the south end, and the length of the west side exceeds that of the east side by nearly as much. The flight of steps, too, comes nearer the east side than the west side by 0,30 m. These seem tokens of an intended asymmetry. The basin is not square with the fountain façade, as one would expect it to be. The only side of it which is practically parallel to the side of the quadrangle next to it is the east side. It was just this side which gave such a lack of symmetry to the quadrangle itself (*Am. J. Arch.* IV [1900], p. 229).[2]

The question might still be raised whether this is the basin referred to by Pausanias, inasmuch as we have another basin, already mentioned, running along the façade. This question can hardly be answered without first settling a preliminary question, viz., whether this sunken square with which we are dealing was really a tank, intended to be filled with water.

Two considerations seem to indicate that it was not filled. In the first place, the floor, especially along the gutter at the foot of the steps, is much worn away as if by feet; secondly, the same wearing appears under the holes through which water flowed into it. These two considerations, however, would only

[1] *Am. J. Arch.* IV (1900), p. 236.

[2] The round basin also, curiously enough, was not symmetrically placed in the square one; its centre was so much to west of the axis of the latter that the eastern gutter did not appear at all before the round basin was broken up.

show that it was *sometimes* empty, and would fall short of proving that it was never filled.

It was always easy to fill it by stopping up the orifice in the northeast corner; and if it were not meant to be filled, why should it exist? It would seen more rational in that case to have the whole quadrangle at the lower level, to facilitate the movement of the crowds. Is it not more likely that it was sometimes filled and sometimes empty?

Now if this was the case, the basin seems to meet in a rather striking way the requirements of the description of Pausanias, who says: "The water flows out of the covered chambers into an open-air basin. It is pleasant to drink; and they say that the Corinthian bronze, when it is red hot, is dipped in this water."[1] Pausanias is clearly speaking of two uses of the water after it flowed into the basin.

It may seem a little difficult to reconcile these two uses. One would naturally prefer to have the blacksmith's work done in a different tank from that out of which one gets his drinking water. To reconcile the contradiction, it is here put forth as a hypothesis which may not seem unreasonable, that the tank was filled when the water was used for dipping bronze, and that it was emptied when it was not so needed, that the pitchers might be brought to the spouts and be filled. There might be some difficulty in adjusting the hours. But if the Corinthians really found that this water had an almost marvellous property which gave ordinary bronze, when dipped in it, a quality which stamped it throughout the world as Corinthian bronze, the women might well be given to understand that at certain times they must go elsewhere to fill their pitchers. The chambers, near at hand, were in all probability in their original use reservoirs out of which water was drawn, and must always have been available for that purpose. Even if Pausanias was entirely wrong about the property of the water, he must have seen a body of water in which dipping would be possible. The

[1] Paus. II, 3, 3: ἐξ ὧν τὸ ὕδωρ ἐς κρήνην ὕπαιθρον ῥεῖ, πιεῖν τε ἡδύ, καὶ τὸ Κορίνθιον χαλκὸν διάπυρον καὶ θερμὸν ὄντα ὑπὸ ὕδατος τούτου βάπτεσθαι λέγουσιν.

use of the upper, shallow tank for this purpose, while pitchers were being filled at the spouts issuing from it, is not likely to occur to anybody.

On the east and west walls of the tank in the marble facing, near the top, are two pairs of round holes, one about 0.15 m. above the other, of the same size as those in the south wall. Those on the east wall are 1.45 m., and those on the west wall 2.08 m. distant from the south end of the basin. I incline to regard the bottom holes as overflow apertures, introduced that the water might not rise over the level of the delivery pipes or overflow the floor of the quadrangle when the orifice in the northeast corner was stopped up. The top holes, being at the same level as the other delivery openings, were probably also made for the same purpose, although there are no traces of pipes near them which could have served to bring or carry off water.[1]

That the quadrangular basin is Roman, and not Byzantine, is sufficiently attested by the recurrence of the semicylindrical gutter cut in blocks of the same white limestone which we have both in the pavement of the street leading out of the Agora toward Lechaeum and in a court of Roman times just north of Pirene, which appears on our plan (PLATE XI).

The round basin, however, probably dates from Byzantine times. Possibly a round form was thought to harmonize better with the semicircular apses on three sides of it.

In conclusion, this is the fitting place to note that the stucco of very fine grain which covers the lower part of the side walls of the chambers of Pirene has considerable paint preserved upon it. The surface is painted blue; but about halfway between the top and bottom a stripe of red 0.04 m. broad runs

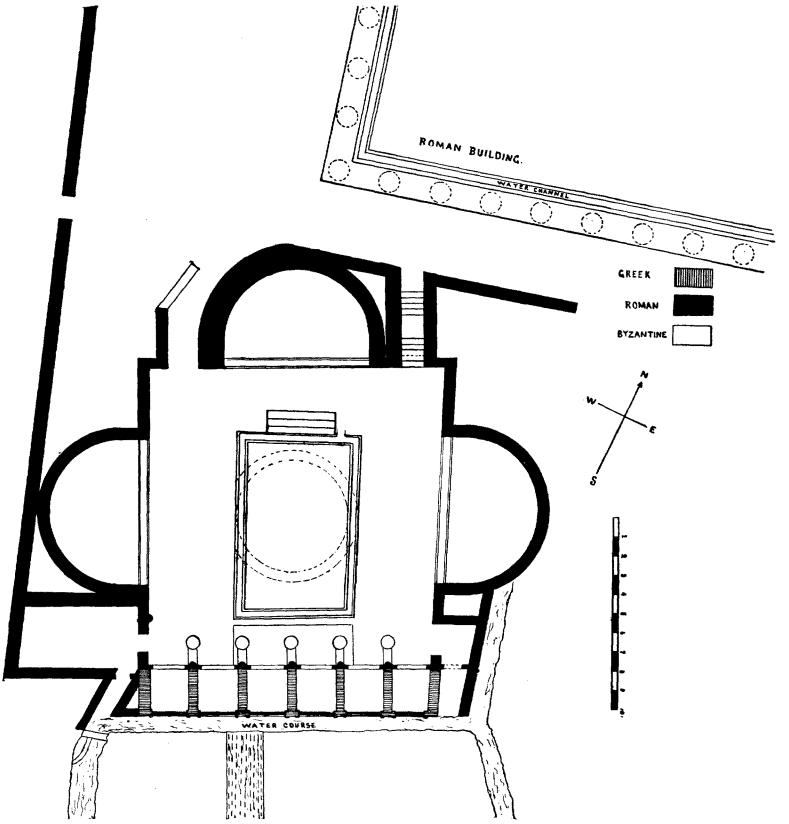
[1] It is possible that the shallow basin once extended along the whole front of Pirene, and that pipes did carry water from its eastern and western parts to these upper holes. At present only two small shallow basins are seen at the west end in the floor of the diminutive Byzantine church which occupied the southwest corner of the quadrangle. Investigation near the east end of the façade is made difficult by the present arrangement for conducting water to the village square.

along the sides. In the corners another red stripe runs up and down.

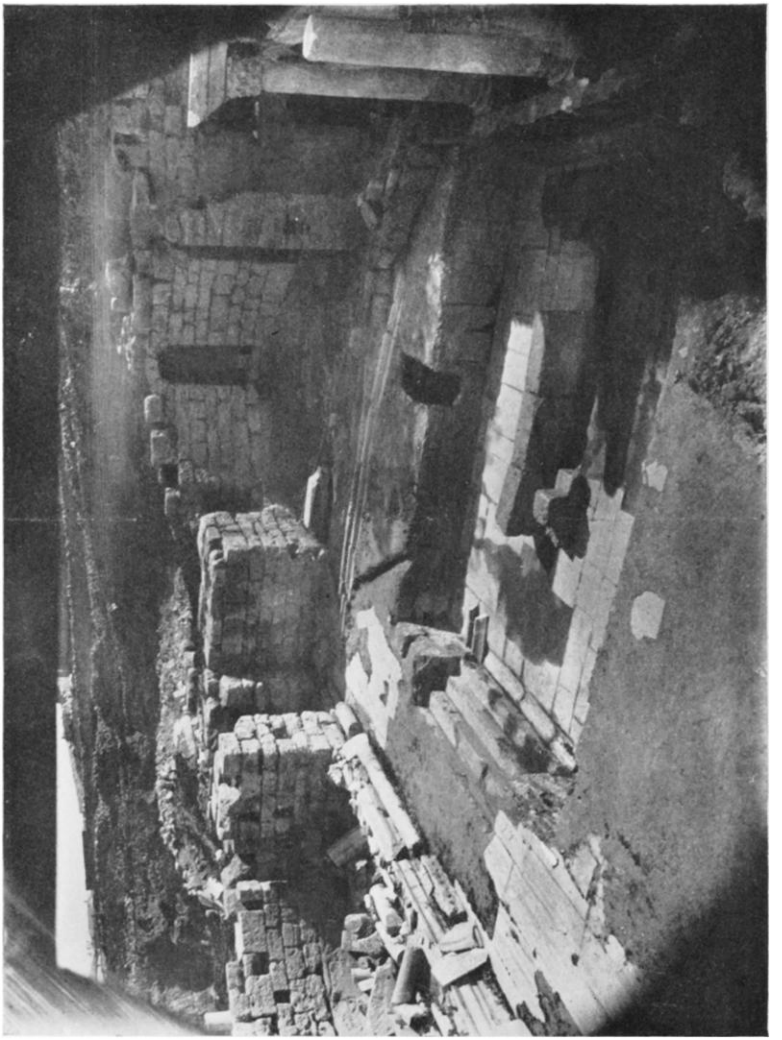
One also sees at just the level of the top of the front parapet a raised band along the side walls, made by the accretion deposited by the water upon the stucco. By the slight variations in the height of the water, the band, which is about 0.03 m. in width, is divided into six or seven little bands.

RUFUS B. RICHARDSON.

ATHENS,
June 27, 1901.



PIRENE IN 1901: GROUND PLAN OF QUADRANGULAR BASIN



PIRENE IN 1901: QUADRANGULAR BASIN